

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE

SUBJECT:DEPARTMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN'S MARCH 12 REMARKS RE
SITUATION IN LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 2245

1. FOLLOWING EXCERPT FROM MARCH 12 DEPARTMENTAL PRESS
BRIEFING CONTAINS DEPT SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS RE SITUATION
IN LEBANON.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

Q. BOB, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE CRISIS IN
LEBANON?

A. I THINK THAT THE MAIN THING WE WOULD SAY IS WHAT WE
HAVE SAID IN THE PAST: OUR HOPE REMAINS THAT THE
LEBANESE WILL FIND A SOLUTION FOR THE PROBLEM THAT HAS
CONFRONTED THEIR COUNTRY--WHICH WILL PRESERVE THE INDE-
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PENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THEIR COUNTRY--AND

PRESERVE THEIR NATIONAL UNITY AND COHESION.

WE WOULD ALSO HOPE THAT IN THIS PARTICULAR PERIOD, THAT THERE WILL NOT BE ANY RENEWED THREATS TO THE STABILITY OF LEBANON.

AS FAR AS WHAT IS HAPPENING IN LEBANON, ITSELF, THE DETAILS CERTAINLY ARE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR TO ME, BUT WE ARE FOLLOWING THE SITUATION AS IT UNFOLDS, AND WE ARE--

Q. BOB, COULD I ASK YOU--

Q. WHEN YOU SAY, "THREATS" DO YOU MEAN EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL--OR BOTH?

A. BOTH.

Q. YOU MEAN "BOTH".

IS THAT AN ADMONITION TO ANY STATE IN THE AREA THAT YOU COULD TELL US ABOUT?

A. NO, IT IS A GENERAL REAFFIRMATION OF STATEMENTS THAT WE HAVE MADE IN THE PAST ABOUT LEBANON.

Q. BOB, YOU USED STRONGER LANGUAGE THAN "HOPE" IN THE PAST, IN TALKING ABOUT THREATS, AND PARTICULARLY FROM THE OUTSIDE. YOU ARE NOT MEANING TO WEAKEN THAT?

A. I HAVE NOT READ THE TEXTS OF WHAT I SAID BEFORE, BUT, NO, THERE IS NO CHANGE IN OUR POSITION.

Q. BOB, WERE YOU REFERRING, IN THE "EXTERNAL" TO SYRIA AND ISRAEL?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO IDENTIFY WHERE ANY THREATS MIGHT COME FROM.

Q. WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "RENEWED"? DOES THAT MEAN THAT SOMEBODY HAS THREATENED BEFORE, AND YOU HOPE THEY DON'T
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DO IT AGAIN?

DO YOU MEAN "RENEWED"?

A. YES, I MEAN RENEWED.

Q. IS THAT THE WORD YOU MEAN?

A. RIGHT.

Q. ALL RIGHT, THEN WHO HAS THREATENED THE STABILITY?

A. THERE HAVE BEEN THREATS TO THE STABILITY OF LEBANON IN THE PAST.

Q. FROM WHERE?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO IDENTIFY WHERE THOSE THREATS HAVE COME FROM.

Q. HOW SERIOUS DO YOU CONSIDER THE SITUATION IN LEBANON, VIS-A-VIS THE MASSING TROOPS ON ISRAEL, ON ISRAEL'S BORDER?

A. I AM JUST NOT IN A POSITION TO ASSESS THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION IN LEBANON. IT IS SERIOUS, BUT I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO ASSESS IT.

Q. BACK IN LEBANON, HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONTACT WITH THE SYRIANS?

YOU SEEM TO HAVE--YOU THOUGHT THEIR ROLE WAS CONSTRUCTIVE A FEW WEEKS AGO. NOW IT SEEMS THAT THE SYRIANS--NOT PART OF THIS COUP--BUT ANYWAY KNOW ABOUT IT AND SEEM TO ACCEPT IT.

SO, HAVE YOU BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE SYRIANS ABOUT IT?

A. IN THE FIRST PLACE, I FRANKLY DO NOT KNOW WHETHER WE HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH ANYBODY ABOUT IT. IN ANY EVENT, WE NORMALLY DO NOT DISCUSS DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES WE HAVE UNCLASSIFIED

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WITH COUNTRIES, ON ANY SUBJECT. SO I AM NOT PREPARED TO ADDRESS IT.

Q. NO, I AM NOT ASKING THE DETAILS. SIMPLY WHETHER OR NOT YOU HAVE HAD ANY CONTACT.

A. I THINK ALL PARTIES CONCERNED UNDERSTAND OUR POSITION, AND NOT ONLY FROM PUBLIC STATEMENTS SUCH AS I HAVE MADE TODAY.

Q. DOES THE SITUATION IN LEBANON POSE ANY THREAT TO ISRAEL?

A. I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION.

Q. DOES SYRIA CONTINUE TO PLAY THE CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE THAT
YOU SAY IT PLAYED A FEW WEEKS AGO?

A. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT ROLE SYRIA IS PLAYING TODAY IN THE
SITUATION IN LEBANON. END TEXT.
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